

VZCZCXRO8274

RR RUEHCD RUEHGD RUEHHO RUEHMC RUEHNG RUEHNL RUEHRD RUEHRS RUEHTM
DE RUEHME #4490/01 2231638
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 111638Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2640
INFO RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHMFIUU/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEAHLA/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
RHMFIUU/CDR USNORTHCOM
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 004490

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [MX](#)

SUBJECT: PRD EXPLOITS ELEMENT OF SURPRISE IN ON-GOING
PROTESTS

REF: A. MEXICO 4292

[B. MEXICO 4368](#)

[C. MONTEREY 989](#)

[D. MEXICO 4311](#)

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: Following the Electoral Tribunal's (TEPJF) announcement on August 5 that it would recount 11,839 precincts (9.07 percent of the nationwide total), PRD Candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) vowed new acts of civil resistance. After a noisy protest in front of the TEPJF itself immediately following the decision, the PRD has begun what appears to be a series of "surprise protests" at various locations within and near Mexico City. PRD national spokesman Gerardo Fernandez Norona explained in media interviews that all protests would remain "peaceful and legal," but would not identify what future demonstrations would take place, citing that future actions will continue to be of a surprise nature. Demonstrators have already carried out several such "surprise" demonstrations, blocking entrances to major bank headquarters and the Attorney General's (PGR) office, as well as briefly preventing tolls from being collected on major highways leading into Mexico City. This morning, demonstrators have blocked the Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP) as well as the Tax Administration System headquarters (SAT). While such actions so far have been limited to Mexico City and its surroundings, Fernandez claimed that the resistance movement would widen to a national scale. End Summary.

WHAT WILL THEY BLOCKADE NEXT?

[1](#)2. (U) In response to the TEPJF's decision to order only a partial recount of votes cast in the July 2 presidential election (ref B), AMLO has vowed new acts of civil resistance. With Mexico City's central plaza (Zocalo) and Paseo de la Reforma still occupied by encampments of AMLO supporters, the PRD has added a new tactic to its repertoire: surprise demonstrations. Early in the morning on August 8, commuters to Mexico City were granted free passage on major tollways leading into the city, as AMLO supporters took control of toll booths and waved drivers through free of charge. In an interview with major news outlets on August 9, PRD national spokesman Norona confirmed that these actions of "civil resistance" would continue unannounced, but would remain peaceful. He also claimed that the civil resistance movement would expand nationwide.

[1](#)3. (U) Fernandez made this assertion August 9, shortly after protesters from the Zocalo and Reforma encampments blockaded the headquarters of three major banks: Banamex, Bancomer, and

HSBC. Poloff visited the blockade of the HSBC headquarters on Reforma, where approximately 80-100 demonstrators staged a sit-in in front of the entrances of the building. Police had lined up between the protesters and the building's entrance to prevent them from entering, and it appeared that no one could get into or out of the office complex. Poloff spoke with some demonstrators, several of whom admitted to be among those participating in the Reforma encampment. When asked why they had chosen the HSBC building, one demonstrator responded, "We are here because investors and bankers like those from HSBC supported Calderon during the election with money, and we don't think this should be a country where the wealthy have such great influence." Some demonstrators held up a banner that said "Smile-- honorable people pay taxes," a reference to AMLO's campaign assertion that major corporations have been cheating on their taxes.

14. (U) Surprise protests did not stop at the banks, however, as the following day approximately 100 people protested outside an office of the Federal Preventative Police (PFP) and about 300 outside the Attorney General's Office. An earlier surprise protest blocked entrances to Mexico City's stock exchange for several hours (ref D). An attempt to block roads to the Mexico City Airport on August 10 was unsuccessful, however, and AMLO allies disclaimed any responsibility for that action. Today, AMLO supporters have blockaded the SHCP and the SAT.

A THIRD TRIP TO THE ZOCALO

15. (U) On August 9, poloffs made their third visit to the
MEXICO 00004490 002 OF 002

Zocalo encampments which, along with those on Reforma, appear to provide much of the manpower for the recent "surprise" demonstrations. Compared with our last visit (ref A), camp residents appeared a little worse for wear, possibly because of deteriorating hygiene conditions. Clothing and hygiene products were in many cases strewn across the plaza, and many wooden platforms had been brought in because of problems with flooding caused by heavy rainstorms. It appeared to poloffs that there were fewer people on the plaza than during our prior visit, with many larger tents completely empty. An emboff who cycles to work on Reforma observed that there appear to be far fewer people emerging from the tents in the mornings than during the first days of the occupation.

16. (U) Compared to previous visits to the Zocalo, it appeared that more lower-income people were participating; earlier, poloffs met several academics and professionals camping there. State camps are continuing to rotate participants, sometimes on a daily basis. When asked where the demonstrators were receiving their food, all responded that it came from donations from people in Mexico City. State camp leaders continued to assert that they would maintain a presence until the Tribunal "resolves" the electoral challenge. In this context, it is useful to note that logistical support for the encampments remains well-organized and includes regular food deliveries, hot meals, summer camp-type classes for children, water trucks, portable hygiene facilities, etc.

COMMENT: A NATIONAL MOVEMENT?

17. (SBU) Our visits to the encampments in the Zocalo and on Reforma and our discussions with analysts and observers leaves us with the impression that the encampments and day-to-day protests draw on a dedicated core of perhaps several thousand people, many of whom have been imported from other states. While the PRD clearly seeks to expand its protests nationally, it remains to be seen how successful it will be. Certainly the PRD's earliest attempts at organizing protests outside Mexico City -- all in the industrial north

-- have fizzled (ref C), although it's possible the PRD will find it easier going in those southern states where AMLO's support is greater.

Visit Mexico City's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/mexicocity>

GARZA